APPENDIX A

Waterfowl Hunt Plan November 2004

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Sacramento County, California

DRAFT

Reviewed by:		Date:	
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Approved by:		Date:	
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I. Introduction

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is located in southern Sacramento County, west of the City of Elk Grove and 10 miles south of Sacramento. It lies within the Morrison Creek, Cosumnes, and Mokelumne River watersheds and the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta (Delta). The approved Refuge boundary is roughly defined by Morrison Creek to the north, Franklin Boulevard and Interstate 5 to the east, the former Southern Pacific Railroad to the west, and Twin Cities Road (Lost Slough) to the south.

The Refuge was established in 1994 for the management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife, for the conservation of wetlands, and to preserve habitats for migratory waterfowl. Acquisition was authorized by the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986, the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, and the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. Another Refuge purpose is the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The Refuge boundary encompasses 18,200 acres, including a core Refuge of about 9,000 acres and a 9,000-acre "Cooperative Wildlife Management Area" (USFWS 1992). Currently, approximately 6,069 acres are actively managed by the Service. The Refuge has three permanent lakes, Beach Lake, North Stone Lake, and South Stone Lake that are included in a network of seasonally flooded agricultural lands and natural and managed wetlands. In addition, riparian habitat borders lakes, perennial streams, and sloughs. With its rich mosaic of Central Valley native habitats - grassland, permanent and seasonal wetlands, riparian and oak forest - the Stone Lakes basin supports a diversity of native wildlife and plant species. The Refuge's prime location on the Pacific Flyway attracts thousands of migratory birds seeking feeding and resting habitat.

The Refuge is a focal point for humans and wildlife. Public interest in potential recreational opportunities has remained high since Refuge establishment in 1994. Currently, visitors may tour the Refuge on the second and fourth Saturday of each month. Special tours and other environmental education programs are also available on request. More than 2,000 scouts and school children visit the Refuge annually. The Refuge hosts a variety of special volunteer events such as habitat restoration days and the annual Walk on the Wildside, a full day on the Refuge with exhibits, tours and children's activities. In addition to other public uses, the Refuge has potential to offer expanded opportunities for wildlife dependent uses, including a waterfowl hunting program. Other uses including wildlife observation, fishing, environmental education and interpretation, photography and boating will be evaluated during the ongoing Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) process, which is expected to be completed in 2005.

II. Conformance with Statutory Authorities

National Wildlife Refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) the purposes of an individual refuge, Service policy, and laws and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

Prior to opening a refuge to hunting, the Refuge must comply with a number of Federal environmental requirements including: (1) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); (2) Endangered Species Act; (3) National Historic Preservation Act; (4) evaluate the compatibility of the proposed use with Refuge purposes and the mission of the NWRS; and (5) receive concurrence from the state of California. References for these documents are included.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 provides guidelines and directives for the administration and management of all areas in the NWRS. The Act also defines six wildlife dependent priority public uses, including hunting, that refuges should strive to provide when compatible with the purposes of the refuge and the mission of the NWRS.

It is anticipated that the estimated initial cost of a waterfowl hunting program would be \$9,000. Annual costs of the hunt program are expected to be approximately \$11,000 if the entire program is run by Refuge employees. The program would cost much less (approximately \$4,000 annually) if the hunt program was staffed by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) employees. An estimated 780 hunter-days would occur on the Refuge with the implementation of this hunt plan. All hunting would be in accordance with applicable state seasons and regulations. Refuge-specific regulations would also govern waterfowl hunting activities.

III. Statement of Objectives

The objectives of the Stone Lake NWR waterfowl hunt plan are to:

- 1. Provide a quality wildlife-dependent recreational experience, using a renewable natural resource.
- 2. Promote hunter education and ethics through information and enforcement of hunting regulations and compliance with compatibility determinations (site reference).
- 3. Promote youth and mobility-impaired access by providing mobility-impaired accessible blinds and designated blinds for youth hunters.

The interim goals from the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for establishment of the approved boundary for the Refuge (USFWS 1992) are to:

- 1. Preserve, enhance and restore a diverse assemblage of native Central Valley plant communities and their associated fish, wildlife, and plants.
- 2. Preserve, enhance and restore habitat to maintain and assist in the recovery of rare, threatened, and endangered plants and animals.
- 3. Preserve, enhance and restore wetlands and adjacent agricultural lands to provide foraging and sanctuary habitat needed to achieve the distribution and population levels of migratory waterfowl and other water birds consistent with the goals and objectives of the north American waterfowl management plan and central valley habitat joint venture.
- 4. Create linkages between Refuge habitats and habitats on adjacent lands to reverse past impacts of habitat fragmentation on wildlife and plants.
- 5. Coordinate Refuge land acquisition and management activities with other agencies and organizations and to maximize the effectiveness of Refuge contributions to regional habitat needs.

- 6. Provide for environmental education, interpretation, and fish and wildlife oriented recreation in an urban setting accessible to large populations.
- 7. Manage riverine wetlands and adjacent floodplain lands in a manner consistent with local, State and Federal flood management; sediment and erosion control, and water quality objectives.

Therefore, the hunt program would contribute to Refuge Goal #6 (see above) without impeding the ability of the Refuge to achieve the remaining Refuge goals. This plan would allow waterfowl hunting on designated days (Wednesdays and Saturdays) from blinds on approximately 15 percent of the Refuge (912 of 6,069 acres). In addition, hunter education, ethics, and opportunities for youth and mobility impaired hunters would be emphasized as part of the Refuge program. Additional youth hunts would also occur before or after the regular hunting season in accordance with State regulations.

IV. Assessment

Waterfowl surveys have been done on a biweekly basis for the past five years by Refuge staff and volunteers. CDFG and the Service's Division of Migratory Bird Management conduct aerial censuses across the entire State, including the Refuge, as part of the annual wintering waterfowl survey. These data are collated throughout the nation to estimate waterfowl populations which are then used to determine hunting seasons and daily take limits.

Are wildlife populations present in numbers sufficient to sustain optimum population levels for priority Refuge objectives other than hunting?

Yes, wildlife populations are present in sufficient numbers to sustain optimum population levels for priority Refuge objectives other than hunting (see section III for a list of Refuge goals). The Refuge would adopt harvest regulations set by the State within Federal guidelines.

Under Federal law established by international treaties with Canada, Mexico and other countries with whom we share migratory birds, the Service has ultimate responsibility for regulating migratory bird hunting nationwide The Service establishes the frameworks that govern all migratory bird hunting in the United States through a regulatory process that begins each year in January and includes public consultation. Within the boundaries established by those frameworks, State wildlife commissions have the flexibility to determine season length, bag limits, and areas for migratory game bird hunting.

Biweekly waterfowl surveys indicate waterfowl begin to arrive at the Refuge in the early fall and numbers continue to increase through December/January. Peak waterfowl numbers occur during the months of November through February and range between 20,000 and 30,000, depending on food and water availability. Population numbers within a 25-mile radius of the Refuge are over 250,000 during the fall and winter. The birds utilize the Refuge for resting and feeding. Furthermore, only 15 percent of the Refuge would be hunted two days a week, with approximately 70 percent closed to all public use during the migratory season.

Other resident and migratory birds and wildlife would be minimally impacted by the hunt program because of the limited days of hunting and percentage of Refuge closed to other uses. Hunting would be allowed only until 12:00 PM to ensure that State-listed greater sandhill cranes would continue to utilize seasonal wetlands as foraging and roosting sites. Other special status species would not be impacted because the State-listed Swainson's hawk have departed for wintering grounds in Central and South America and the Federally-listed giant garter snake is occupying underground hibernacula by the start of hunting season. Therefore, a waterfowl hunt can be sustained that would not impact waterfowl populations and populations of resident and other migratory wildlife and allow the Refuge to contribute to the interim goals listed above.

Is there competition for habitat between target species and other wildlife?

Possibly, although each species occupies a unique niche even though there is a finite amount of space available to satisfy various habitat requirements for water, food, cover, breeding, and roosting areas. Management of seasonal and permanent wetlands is currently guided by the interim goals of the FEIS and specific management objectives are being developed as part of the Refuge CCP process to be completed in 2005. These goals and objectives would insure that habitats would be managed to provide for a diverse number of species including waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wading birds.

Are there unacceptable levels of predation by target species on other wildlife forms?

No, some waterfowl species feed on fish and invertebrates as well as plant seeds and tubers, but it is not likely that they feed at levels that impact other wildlife on the Refuge.

V. Description of Hunting Program

The waterfowl hunt program on Stone Lakes NWR would be a small program compared to other refuges in the general area such as Sacramento NWR, San Luis NWR, or the State's Yolo Wildlife Area. But Stone Lakes NWR would provide hunting opportunities for a growing urban population close to Sacramento. In response to inquiries from the public and involved agencies and organizations, the Refuge proposes to provide a hunt program that would emphasize opportunities for youth and mobility-impaired hunters.

The Refuge would be open to waterfowl hunting in the South Stone Lake unit (i.e., Sun River, Lodi Gun Club, Lewis Investment Company (LIC) properties). The three most commonly-taken species would be mallard, teal, and gadwall. Canada and white-fronted geese may also be hunted but are not found in large numbers around South Stone Lake. Hunting would occur two days per week, Wednesday and Saturday from ½ hour before sunrise until 12:00 PM The program would initially accommodate a minimum of 12 hunters on the Sun River unit. But as funding and more facilities become available (e.g. blinds, parking lots, access roads, boat launch areas) during the next five years, the program would expand to include portions of Lodi Gun Club and LIC units and a maximum of 22 hunters. Typically, two hunters would be assigned to each blind. Hunting would occur from spaced-blinds, adequately separated to ensure a safe and quality hunting experience. Two blinds designed for mobility-impaired hunters would be reserved for mobility impaired hunters only. In the event that the blinds are not filled, they would remain unoccupied.

Two additional blinds would be reserved for youth hunters and their escorts on Saturdays. In the event no youth apply, the blinds would be open to adult hunters. Hunting dogs for retrieval of birds would be allowed, but must be under the control of their owners at all times. Some water blinds on portions of South Stone Lake would only be accessible by hand-launched, non-motorized boats (e.g. canoe, kayak, john boat) that must be provided by the hunter.

Youth hunts would also be held either before or after the regular season in accordance with State regulations. Hunters will by randomly selected by an automated draw system cooperatively administered by the Service and CDFG. Hunters must possess a valid hunting license and all Federal and State duck stamps and Harvest Information Program (HIP) card.

A. Areas of the Refuge that support populations of the target species:

Waterfowl feed, loaf and rest and breed on the Refuge throughout the year. Waterfowl utilize the managed permanent and seasonal wetlands, flooded grasslands and sloughs and lake habitats of North and South Stone Lake, Beach Lake and the Southern Pacific Railroad Cut, although only the South Stone Lake unit would be open for hunting. The Refuge currently manages about 310 acres of cropland, 3,320 acres of grassland, 400 acres of open water, and 840 acres of permanent and seasonal wetlands and marsh, totaling approximately 6,069 acres.

Peak waterfowl numbers occur during the months of November through February and range between 20,000 and 30,000 depending on food and water availability. Population numbers within a 25-mile radius of the Refuge are over 250,000 during the migration and wintering season. Waterfowl censuses have recorded between 5,000-10,000 birds in the South Stone Lake unit. Common nesting species in the spring and summer include mallard, gadwall, cinnamon teal, wood duck and Canada goose. The most common wintering ducks within the South Stone Lake unit are: mallard, gadwall, northern pintail, northern shoveler, teal species, wood duck, American wigeon, and bufflehead. Geese species including the Canada goose (approximately 2,000 greater, cackling and possibly Aleutian) and greater white-fronted goose (about 800 in 2002 and 2,500 in 2004), concentrate in the North Stone Lake area, but may be seen in small numbers (<100 birds) in the South Stone Lake unit.

B. Areas to be opened to the public:

Three of the nine refuge units (Sun River, Lodi Gun Club and LIC) would be open to hunting according to this plan. The program would initially accommodate a minimum of 12 hunters on the Sun River property. But as funding and more facilities become available (e.g. blinds, parking lots, access roads, boat launch areas) during the next five years, the program would expand to include portions of Lodi Gun Club and LIC and a maximum of 22 hunters. The 532-acre Sun River property would be utilized initially because of the existence of infrastructure for the proposed program. Sun River is located north of Lambert Road and contains 256 acres of seasonal and permanent wetlands. Lodi Gun Club adjoins Sun River on the north boundary and incorporates the main portion of the lake. The 71- acre LIC unit adjoins Lodi Gun Club to the north.

C. Species to be taken, hunting periods:

The proposed hunts would take place during the normal State season, typically from late October/early November to late January/early February as set by the State Commission in accordance with Federal guidelines. Hunting would occur on Wednesdays and Saturdays during the waterfowl season from ½ hour before sunrise until 12:00 PM. Waterfowl species to be taken may include, ducks, geese coots and moorhens. Common duck species include mallard, teal species, wood duck and gadwall. Geese may include Canada and white-fronted geese, although few geese have been recorded in the South Stone Lake area.

D. Justification for the permit, if one is required: No permit is required.

E. Procedures for consultation and coordination with the State:

The following procedures would be done:

- Refuge staff would meet with CDFG managers and wardens before and after hunt season to discuss hunting season and possible improvements for the coming year.
- A memorandum of understanding (MOU) would be developed with the CDFG regarding the administration of the hunt.

F. Methods of control and enforcement:

The following methods would be used to control and enforce hunting regulations:

- Hunt boundary signs would be clearly posted.
- Refuge would produce a brochure that clearly shows hunt areas.
- A hunter comment drop box off would be located on the Sun River unit off of Lambert Road at the check station.
- Refuge law enforcement staff would randomly check hunters for compliance with State laws, and refuge-specific regulations pertinent to the hunt including compatibility stipulations.
- A hunter check station would be located on the Sun River unit and be staffed by Refuge, volunteers and/or CDFG or California Waterfowl Association (CWA) staff/volunteers to assist hunters and monitor the hunt.
- Kiosks would be constructed that post maps and informational brochures showing location to blinds, regulations, species identification, and access routes.

G. Funding and staffing requirements:

Administering the hunt program would require Refuge staff time to work with CDFG to randomly select hunters through their automated draw system, prepare the blinds prior to the season, enforce regulations, monitor impacts to other wildlife and ensure safety. It is estimated that 25 hours of staff time would be required to administer the permit program. The orientation/hunter check in would require one or two staff members for about 4-6 hours for every hunt day. Orientation would consist of meeting with the hunters on the hunt day and familiarizing them with the area and location of blinds and any hazards.

Law enforcement officers would spend an estimated 10-15 hours per week enforcing regulations beyond the normal staffing time.

Initial cost estimates included construction of one information kiosk (\$6,000), maps and brochures (\$1,000), and 80 hours of staff time (\$2,000) for a total of \$9,000. Estimated annual costs include approximately 330 hours of staff time including law enforcement (\$8,250), blind and structure maintenance (\$2,500), portapotty (\$411), and brochures, maps, and mailings (\$200), for a total of \$11,661. The total estimated staff hours would decrease to approximately 175 hours if CDFG, CWA and/or volunteers were to run the hunter check station.

H. Consideration of mobility-impaired hunters:

Providing opportunities for mobility-impaired hunters is one of the goals of the waterfowl hunting program at the Refuge. Specifically the program would:

- Provide two universally-accessible blinds on the Sun River Unit for the exclusive use of mobility-impaired persons.
- Ensure parking areas leading to blinds are accessible for persons in wheelchairs, or using walkers.

VI. Measures Taken to Avoid Conflicts with Other Management Objectives

The hunt program as outlined was designed to minimize or eliminate any conflicts with other management objectives. These objectives include providing the public with other wildlife dependent opportunities such as wildlife observation and photography, and providing habitat for other wetland dependent species such as shorebirds, grebes and other wading birds and Federal and State special status species including giant garter snake, greater sandhill crane, and Swainson's hawk.

A. Biological Conflicts

The proposed hunt program is intended to minimize or avoid potential biological conflicts with other wetland-dependent species (e.g., special status species) through education, monitoring, and limiting hunt days and times. Potential biological conflicts include flushing other migratory and resident birds from areas being hunted or the take of non-target species either by mistake or willfully.

The only Federally-listed species that may be present in the South Stone Lake unit the Refuge during waterfowl hunting season is the federally threatened, giant garter snake (GGS). Since hunting would occur during the dormant period when snakes are occupying below-ground hibernacula (late October-March), there should be no effects to this species from the hunting program (Appendix C - Memorandum and Evaluation for Endangered Species Act). Hunters would be given a map showing their route to their blinds. Refuge staff would ensure that hunters follow all regulations and report any snake sightings the morning of the hunt. The Refuge would also monitor areas likely to contain GGS hibernacula to determine if modifications to the hunt program are warranted. All improvements (e.g., roads, parking lots, blinds) necessary for this proposed hunting

program were previously constructed when the planned hunting area (i.e. Sun River) was in private ownership. As part of the Biological Opinion for the Programmatic Intra-Service Section 7 Consultation for routine Refuge operations that will be prepared for the CCP, the Service will address the potential effects of habitat restoration and regular management and maintenance activities related to the proposed hunting program. As funding and staff are available, surveys will be conducted for GGS to better ascertain the status of the species on the Refuge. Depending on the results of biological monitoring, modifications to the hunting program may be implemented, where appropriate.

State-listed species present on the Refuge include the Swainson's hawk which migrates to Mexico and South America during winter months and the greater sandhill crane. Greater sandhill cranes have been recorded roosting, loafing, and feeding on the Sun River unit. Restricting hunting to two days per week and ending it by 12:00 PM should minimize disturbance to cranes. The birds roost in seasonal wetlands at night, leaving before dawn to feed in surrounding agricultural fields, and returning to the irrigated pastures around noon (G. Ivey, pers. comm.). The Refuge would monitor any behavioral responses and movements of cranes to determine if changes to the hunt program are appropriate.

Other wetland-dependent birds such as herons and shorebirds may be flushed from the area during hunting, but only 15 percent of the Refuge would be hunted, with approximately 70 percent of the Refuge remaining closed to other public use on hunt days. Therefore, there should be no detrimental effect on other birds utilizing wetlands because of the availability of nearby habitats and the limited days and times of the waterfowl hunts.

A Compatibility Determination evaluating the compatibility of the proposed program with Refuge purposes and the mission of the NWRS has been prepared. In addition, an Environmental Assessment describing the potential environmental impacts of waterfowl hunting is available for public review and comment.

International treaties for the conservation of migratory birds mandate that protecting and maintaining overall populations be given a higher priority than harvesting of waterfowl. The Service, State wildlife agencies, academic institutions, and federal and provincial governments in Canada have long-term cooperative programs that monitor breeding-population status, harvest levels, production, migration, and other parameters utilized for regulating harvests. The process of regulating waterfowl harvests involves a lengthy sequence of public involvement and decision-making by the Service, state wildlife agencies, and the Canadian and Mexican governments during the regulatory cycle. The process involves assessment of waterfowl populations, publication of Federal Register notices, and numerous meetings by Waterfowl Flyway Councils and the Service Regulations Committee. It culminates in regulations being set at the flyway level (season lengths, daily bag limits, and outside dates for the earliest opening and latest closing dates for a hunting season) and special regulations at the State level (e.g., split seasons, harvest zones, special seasons, area closures).

Within the general region of Stone Lakes NWR, waterfowl harvesting currently takes place in a number of other public and private hunt areas, including: Cosumnes River Preserve, Yolo Wildlife Area, various State holdings within the Delta, and private duck hunting clubs in the Yolo Bypass and other parts of the Delta. As other habitat restorations or enhancements occur through programs such as the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture and Calfed Bay-Delta Authority, new hunting opportunities may become available in association with these projects.

When considering the cumulative environmental impacts of these other programs and the manner in which waterfowl harvest is regulated, waterfowl populations on the Refuge should not be adversely affected by their anticipated harvest during a two-day per week public hunting program. Moreover, since 85 percent (5,157 of 6,069 acres) of the Refuge would not be open to hunting, there should be more than adequate non-hunting areas to support current Refuge waterfowl populations and to withstand the cumulative effects of off-refuge hunting programs. The non-hunted portions of the Refuge would also accommodate increased use by waterfowl populations as these habitats are enhanced in the future.

B. Public Use Conflicts

The waterfowl hunting program would be conducted to have minimal or no impact on other public uses at the Refuge by implementing the following measures:

- The hunt area would be closed to all other public uses on hunt days to eliminate conflicts between uses.
- Only pedestrian traffic would be allowed for able-bodied hunters going to and from hunting blinds.
- Dogs used for retrieving waterfowl must remain in control of the owner at all times.
- Non-motorized boats may be used to access water blinds on the Sun River unit.
- Other uses including wildlife observation, photography, fishing, environmental education and interpretation will be addressed in the Refuge CCP effort to be completed in 2005. Depending on the outcome of this planning process, 15-20 percent of the Refuge may be open for these activities, including portions of the South Stone Lake unit on non hunting days.
- Refuge units would be posted with boundary signs and public use information signs.
- Entry and departure times for hunters would be restricted to ½ before sunrise to 12:00 PM.
- The hunt area would be closed to hunting on Sunday to allow other users to access South Stone Lake. These other uses will be addressed in the Refuge CCP effort to be completed in 2005.

C. Administrative Conflicts

There are no administrative conflicts with this proposed hunt at this time. As the program

expands, there may be conflicts associated with the cost of the program. These conflicts would be resolved by seeking partnerships with the State and increased use of volunteers to assist with the program.

VII. Conduct of the Hunt

A. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

The hunting of geese, ducks, coots and moorhens during the waterfowl season as determined by the State on designated areas of the Refuge are subject to the following conditions:

- Hunting is allowed on Wednesdays and Saturdays from ½ hour before sunrise to 12:00 PM.
- Hunters will be selected through a random drawing process and must bring a copy of their notification on the day of their hunt.
- Adults 18 years of age or older must accompany hunters under the age of 18.
- No bicycles and other conveyances are allowed. Mobility-impaired hunters should consult the Refuge Manager for allowed conveyances.
- Firearms must be unloaded while transporting them between parking areas and spaced-blind areas.
- Hunters are restrict to their assigned spaced-blind except when they are placing decoys, traveling to and from the parking area, retrieving downed birds, or when shooting to retrieve cripples.
- Hunters may possess no more than 25 shells while in the field.
- Hunters may only possess approved nontoxic shot while in the field.
- Junior hunters must possess a valid Junior Hunting License.
- No person may build or maintain fires.
- Vehicles may stop only at designated parking areas. The Refuge prohibits the dropping of passengers or equipment, or stopping between designated parking areas.
- Only non-motorized boats are permitted to access water blinds on the Sun River unit.
- Hunters must remove all decoys, shell castings and other personal equipment from the Refuge following each day's hunt.
- Hunting dogs may be used for retrieval of birds but must be under the control of their owners at all times
- Alcohol use or possession while hunting is prohibited.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunt

The Stone Lakes NWR is located between the growing urban areas of Elk Grove and Sacramento and the rural farming towns. Therefore a wide variety of opinions were heard during the fall of 2002 public scoping meetings for preparation of the Refuge CCP, at which a potential waterfowl hunting program was discussed. Many hunters were present and voiced their concerns that lands were being added to the Refuge but were not being opened to hunting. Other attendees were unaware that hunting occurs on national wildlife

refuges. As part of the CCP process, Refuge staff are attempting to inform the public that hunting occurs on many refuges within strict guidelines and is one of the priority public uses as identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Hunting has been an historical use since the early 20th century in the South Stone Lake area and specifically on the Sun River Unit up to the Service acquiring the property. As long as a good quality, limited, professionally-conducted hunt takes place, and quality opportunities for non-hunting recreation are provided, the typical visitor to the Refuge is not likely to oppose it. We do anticipate objections from anti-hunting organizations.

C. Hunter Application and Registration Procedures

The public would be notified through the Refuge, CDGF and other appropriate websites and news releases that the Refuge is open to waterfowl hunting on a limited basis. The notices would describe the hunts and inform interested licensed hunters how to apply by specified due dates. Interested hunters would apply for a specific hunt by sending in a postcard with their name, address, and phone number or by applying over the internet. Refuge staff would work with CDFG to randomly select hunters through their automated draw system. Selected hunters must bring a copy of their notification of selection to the Refuge on the day of their hunt.

D. Description of Hunter Selection Process

A random drawing would take place to select the determined number of hunters for each hunt day (see section C above). A news release, Refuge and CDFG website information would announce the date of the drawings. Selected hunters would be notified that their name has been drawn and informed of their hunting date.

E. Media Selection For Announcing and Publicizing the Hunt

The Refuge has a standard list of local media contacts for news releases. A news release announcing the new waterfowl hunting opportunities would be sent out as soon as the hunt plan is approved and a yearly announcement made thereafter. Notices would also be posted on the Refuge, CDFG and other appropriate website and an update sent to hunters on the mailing list.

F. Description of Hunter Orientation

Orientation would consist of meeting with the hunters on the morning of the hunt, providing a list of Refuge-specific regulations, familiarizing them with the area and locations of assigned blinds, special status species awareness (e.g., hunters would be asked to inform staff of any snakes that are seen during the hunt) and any hazards. Additional hunter safety classes may be provided in partnership with CDFG, Ducks Unlimited and California Waterfowl Association. Law enforcement officers would make random checks when hunters are at their assigned blinds.

G. Hunter Requirements

Hunters are required to be familiar with all State, Federal and Refuge-specific regulations.

Refuge specific regulations would be available on the Refuge website and copies would be available on hunt days.

VIII. References

USFWS. 1992. Final Environmental Impact Statement for Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Prepared by Jones and Stokes, Associates for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.